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ABSTRACT

An effective teaching technique for a university extension course for rural special education teachers is the respond/read/replicate/report system. The four-step system was developed to stimulate tired, beleaguered teachers with differing experiences, knowledgeability, and teaching/learning styles who drove up to 60 miles on country roads to attend a 15-session, 2-3 hour evening class after putting in a full day teaching exceptional children. Step 1, "Teachers Respond," permits the teachers to respond to a needs assessment by developing personal course outlines, sequenced and prioritized according to their needs. Step 2, "Teachers Read," provides teachers with time before and after each class to find applicable materials for their next topic from the instructor's portable extension library. In Step 3, "Teachers Replicate" occurs. Given the general topic of the week, teachers read an article applicable to their needs in the classroom in terms of improving behavior, learning, strategies, evaluations, etc. and do an approximate repetition of the idea, theory, method, or technique with their own class. Step 4, "Teachers Report," requires a detailed, formatted written report of what was done in Step 3 and what happened, plus a verbal rendition and discussion of the experiment and its relevancy to the teacher's classroom. (NEC)

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THE RESPOND/READ/REPLICATE/REPORT SYSTEM

BY: RHEA SCHWARTZ

How many of you are or have even been on the firing line in front of kids all day?

How many of you have had to take late afternoon/evening classes -- for certification for re-certification, for credits, for degrees?

Some years ago Dr. Matthew Trippe, University of Michigan professor of Special Education told the story of the poor, tired beleaguered special education teacher who, after a full day with all the perplexities involved with exceptional children had to sit through 2-3 hours of listening to the equally harrassed, tired college professor reading from his/her notes of ye ster-year - the enthusiasm on the part of both was absolutely earth shattering.

How many of you have been through the battle - the teachers on one side wanting, needing to know some new tricks to make Monday morning in the classroom a better place to be - for the kids to learn and for teachers to teach. And on the other side

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we have me, college professor, full of theories and wisdom and research that must be told to and internalized by these teachers - for how else can the classroom become a better place? So I hand out the course outline - a good one after all I've use it nigh onto three years, with revisions and updates of course, and no one complained yet, least of all my undergraduates at the university - . Oh, wait a minute, we have to register and collect money - what? You want to pay next week - oh - you haven't had a pay check since before the summer - good grief, I'm not used to this - don't parents always send tuition money? Well, problem or rather, difference #1 has emerged -- the students out here are not the same as those on campus. OK -- I can live with that; let's get on with the reading assignments -- fortunately I bought the carton of text books with me -- no college book store close by; no text, no crutch for my all-important assignments and lectures for the rest of the semester. So, before you know it we're off to start the course -- me droning on with verbal diarhea and the teachers in front of me, dozing off or glassy eyed -- from tireness, from boredom?

Do you recognize the picture? we've all been through it -- on one side or another and let me tell you people -- it just doesn't work. The teachers pay their money and don't learn, and I get paid for foaming at the mouth - not for teaching -- because without learning there is no teaching.

OK -- now what does someone like me born and raised in the boon docks of New York City know about the boon docks that you

came from. One of my first teaching assignments at Florida A&M University known more for their Marching 100 Band than for their football team or their academic accomplishments, was to teach an extension course in Moultree, Georgia -- can you imagine I had to travel 60 miles north of cosmopolitan Tallahassee, Florida, to sell my course. How amazed I was to discover that most of the 20 teachers converging on the metropolis of Moultree, Georgia, also traveled at least 60 miles from other points on the compass. Well, all arrived, tense and tired from driving those miles on those back roads -- it became quickly apparent that no one of us were ready to be programmed for 2-3 hours of note-taking/lecture-type instruction.

What to do? -- my course outlines burned a hole in my brief case but then again, what do you do in a classroom with kids in order to improve the teaching/learning situation? -- you, good teachers that you are, assess where they are at, so that you can determine what they need to learn and then you facilitate the instruction so that learning does indeed take place.

And that's how we started in Moultree, Georgia. In Marianna, Florida, 60 miles West of Tallahassee the home of the Florida Boys Detention Center and a Florida institution for the mentally handicapped -- the "city" wouldn't exist without them -- in Perry, Florida 60 miles South of Tallahassee -- the former motel capital of the world until the interstate bypassed it -- and you know the rest of the story -- now the center of international trade of you -- know -- what from you -- know --

where.

Madison, Florida -- 60 miles East of Tallahassee formerly boasting large plantations yielding Tung Oil -- now, devestatingly poor, Black, and very rural. And back around the compass West to Quincy, Florida, where they refer to the days when tobacco was king -- now the record holder in Florida, at least, in teenage pregnancies. You know as special educators we recognize that each child in our exceptional education classroom differs from another in terms of physical, social, intellectual, and emotional abilities, behaviors, and functioning, but what I as a teacher of teachers needed to recognize was that teachers, even those of exceptional children, also differ from each other in terms of their experiences, knowledgibility, and teaching/learning styles. These teachers bring with them to the teaching/learning classroom the self-same differences that their children display. The kids are certainly not just like Susie and Johnny on p. 54 of the text book, and likewise, the teachers are not like Ms. Knowitall or Mr. Dumdum in our mind picture of what a special education teacher is like. Therefore, we can no more treat teachers all the same, with the same curriculum, course outline, methods, materials, strategies and evaluations than we would the kids in the classroom. So -- let's find out what these 20 tired teachers really want to learn. What do they really need to know; within the context of the course offering, in order to make the next 15 sessions real and meaningful to them and to me -- not a bore or a waste of time to either? How? -- ask them -- they'll tell you

-- and they did.

Step #1 -- Teachers Respond. We did a needs assessment and then sequenced and prioritized those needs in a task analysis. Discussed ways in which they could learn best and when, appropriate evaluation mechanisms, and criteria for grading -- ie -- course outline developed for and by the teachers themselves. Without access to major libraries and current professional periodicals it become incumbant upon me to supply the resources necessary for the facilitation of instruction. The State of Florida through the offices of Continuing Education has maintained a central extension library since 1910 -- you name it and they will have it, will get it, or will order it for you and it is available to teachers in rural areas. And so with my cartons of books, resources, and current journals matched to the learning needs of the teachers, in the trunk of my car, I changed my CB handle to T^2 Traveling Teacher -- and off we were to:

Step #2 -- Teachers Read -- before and after each class, time is allocated for switch time for finding applicable reading for the next topic on hand and the next learning because at the same time:

Step #3 -- Teachers Replicate is taking place. Given the general topic of the week, the teacher reads an article applicable to his/her needs in the classroom in terms of improving behavior, learning, strategies, evaluations or whatever and does an approximate repetition of the idea, theory, method, technique, or the like as evidenced in the article read with their own class. Yes,

these teachers are doing research in the classroom, they are doing surveys and experiments, they are trying new things -- doing actual evaluations of what we in the ivory tower, those of us who write and are published, say is GREAT because in:

Step #4 -- The Teacher Reports with a step by step, detailed formatted written report of what was done and what happened, as an evaluation for a grade must be reported -- plus a verbal rendition and discussion of the experiment and its relevancy to his/her individual classroom -- did it work, was it meaningful, did it meet the teacher's needs, did the author in the least know anything about the real world.

Let me just share a few of these with you. These particular ones were done for a curriculum course for SLD teachers -- turned out 5 taught SLD kids - 2 on the junior high level, 2 on elementary level, 1 in a resource room, 1 was a physical education teacher, 1 taught English, high school level, 6 were regular classroom teachers, 2 taught Chapter 1 children -- a real variety -- a virtual mixed salad -- and here are some individual dressings:

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At this point in time copies of the "research" reports were passed through the audience; the following represent examples, the references used, and the teacher characteristics:

I. Alternative Resources/Memory and Attention/Penmanship

Heyman, E. (1981). Teach touch typing with blindfolds. Teaching Exceptional Children.

Kathy Barker, elementary resource room teacher, Taylor County, describes the use of the computer to teach correct typing as an alternative communication device for four, seven year old learning disabled students.

II. Alternative Materials/Retention/Geography

Gelzheiser, L. M. (1983). Teaching learning disabled children to memorize: A rationale for plans and practice. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 16, 421-425.

Mack Cottle, middle school teacher of educable mentally handicapped, Taylor County, described teaching the names of the states associated with numbers in the geographic area to a class of educable mentally handicapped using maps and games.

III. Alternative Materials/Language Arts/Silent Letter Syllabization (1982).

Smith, R. Comic relief. Teaching Exceptional Children.

Margaret Parker, third grade Chapter I teacher, Taylor County, described teaching using laminated comic strips to which the children added the dialogue for syllabization exercises.

Modestly, let me say, I think we are on the road to creating a new inservice type teacher -- one who can't wait to tell what happened this week -- let me tell you what I did -- can I be first -- remember Shawn, well, we got him a bath and now the children will talk to him. One of the problems is the amount of time spent/4-5 weeks before any reporting gets done. But it's really an advantage, it's where we learn how to put the meat on the bones and find out -- what the teachers are all about and they find out where I'm coming from. It's a time I learn -- and they teach.

- How can you motivate a kid to read when his whole ambition in life is to get me a pick-up and sell me a load -- of you know what?
- How can you get Shawn to talk -- nobody will go near him, he stinks so -- no running water where he lives?
- How can you get the children to sit still pay attention and show on-task behaviors when the school has an epidemic of pin worms which cause gastric upsets and itching?
- How do you motivate teen-age girls to achieve when they came in happily pregnant because this shows their independence?
- How do you foster relationships and communication among the children when you have to teach the key skills and the kids have to pass the grade level achievement tests?
- How do you expect homework or studying at home when most of their waking time is spent in front of T.V. -- one teacher found his 5th graders broke for a snack during newstime so that they could watch the late show.
- How do you teach Johnny to read when he comes to school already

loaded from a six pack?

- How do you involve parents or grandparents in the education of their children when they come home from work at 6: p.m. -- tired and not knowing what disaster the next day will bring.
- How do you teach about the American dream and the American ethic when 60% of 7th graders in Leon County, Florida, are not living with the parents they were born to?
- How does the rampant animalistic child abuse affect the learning of our children? Why is Tommy so quiet, staring out the window all the time?
- How do your behavior modify 10 year old Willie's trantrums when he threatens suicide and has just cleaned out his desk and given away his tapes to his best friends?
- How do you cope with the new breed of rural latch key kids -- the rural child after school is virtually unsupervised -- used to be only an urban problem?

These are some of the many concerns that my rural teachers this semester are addressing -- and believe me, they will come up with strategies that will at least put them on the road to answering these concerns.

There is nothing more rewarding to a teacher than when a child learns and can communicate this learning to others. The very same gratification is mine when viewing the enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge needed by teachers in rural areas who have the child and the enhancement of the teaching/learning environment as their main concerns. Their individual participation in the

course development and implementation of change in the classroom has been my joy and my learning -- I thank you.